

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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R 281121Z FEB 77

FM AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3749

INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 KHARTOUM 0678

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR SU US XW

SUBJECT: SEELYE CALL ON NIMEIRI

BEGIN SUMMARY: SEELYE'S MEETING WITH NIMEIRI AFFORDED HELPFUL ILLUSTRATION OF CURRENT CORDIALITY IN USG/GOS TIES. NIMEIRI NOTED HIS OPPOSITION TO ANY NEW USG ARMS SALES TO EPMG, OPINED THAT SOMALIS COULD BE WEANED AWAY FROM SOVIETS IF ARABS OFFERED ALTERNATIPA FINANCIAL AND OTHER SUPPORT AND SAID THAT HE WOULD BE WORKING ON THIS AT CURRENT TGUPARTITE "SUMMIT" HERE. END SUMMARY.

1. DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY SEELYE, ACCOMPANIED BY AMBASSADOR, SPENT APPROXIMATELY ONE HOUR WITH PRESIDENT NIMEIRI FEB 27. NIMEIRI WAS ABLE TO ADVANCE MEETING, ORIGINARLY PLANNED FOR FEB 28, OWING TO SLIPPAGE IN TIMING OPENING TRIPARTITE SUMMIT.

2. SEELYE EPXRESSED PLEASURE AT OPPORTUNITY TO BE RECEIVED
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BY PRESIDENT NIMEIRI AND RECALLED VISIT BY PRESIDENT TO US LAST JUNE. SEELYE NOTED THAT US/SUDANESE BILATERAL RELATIONS ARE NOW EXCELLENT AND STATED THAT NEW ADMINISTRATION DESIRED TO MALENTAIN THISYSRELATIONSHIP. IN ADDITION TO OUR COMMON POLICY OBXKECTIVES, SEELYZ

REFERRED TO RESUMPTION BILATERAL PROGRAMS. WITH REGARD TO ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE, HE SAID USG DESIRES TO ASSIST THE SUDAN

TO THE EXTENT POSSIBLE IN MEETING ITS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT NEEDS. SEELYE SAID THAT WITH REGARD TO THE SUDANESE INTEREST IN PURCHASING C-130S, SOME DELAY MUST BE EXPECTED SVCE THE NEW ADMINISTRATION IS NOW UNDERTAKING A REVIEW OF OUR GLOBAL ARMS TRANSFER POLICY. HE WISHED THE PRESIDENT TO UNDERSTAND THIS DELAY WAS NOT RELATED TO ANY CHANGE IN USG ATTITUDES TOWARD THE SUDAN.

3. SEELYE OBSERVED THAT KHARTOUM IS ONE OF SEVERAL CAPITALS IN NORTHEAST AFRICA WHICH HE IS VISITING, REFLECTING THE IMPORTANCE AND CONCERN WITH WHICH THE US VIEWS THE HORN OF AFRICA. HE COMMENTED THAT THE SUDAN OCCUPIES A CENTRAL POSITION BETWEEN AFRICA AND THE ARAB WORLD AND IS IN A POSITION TO PLAY A USEFUL ROLE IN BOTH AREAS. THE FACT THAT SECRETARY VANCE HAD VISITED THE MIDDLE EAST SO SOON AFTER THE ADVENT OF THE NEW ADMINISTRATION REFLECTS THE URGENCY WHICH IT ATTACHES TO A SETTLEMENT OF THE ARAB/ISRAELI DISPUTE. ALSO SIGNIFICANT IS THE FACT THAT THE NEW ADMINISTRATION HAS PROMPTLY AND PUBLICLY ARTICULATED A STRONG POSITION IN SUPPORT OF BLACK MAJORITY RULE IN AFRICA AND HAS ANNOUNCED ITS INTENTION TO ASSIST IN NEGOTIATING EFFORTS WITH REGARD TO A PEACEFUL RESOLUTION OF THE PROBLEMS OF RHODESIA AND NAMIBIA.

4. SEELYE CONTINUED BY EXPRESSING THE HOPE THAT THE US AND THE SUDAN COULD CONSULT CLOSELY WITH REGARD TO DEVELOPMENTS IN AFRICA, PARTICULARLY RE THE HORN. THE USG SUPPORTS THE INDEPENDENCE AND TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY OF DJIBOUTI AND IS PREPARED TO DO WHATEVER IT CAN TO PROMOTE AN ORDERLY AND PEACEFUL RESOLUTION OF THIS PROBLEM. HOWEVER, THE CAPACITY OF THE US TO INFLUENCE EVENTS ON THE HORN IS LIMITED IN VIEW OF THE LESS THAN CORDIAL RELATIONS WHICH EXIST BETWEEN US AND SOMALIA AND US AND ETHIOPIA. CONFIDENTIAL

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WE ARE IN TOUCH WITH THE FRENCH REGARDING DJIBOUTI.

5. WITH RESPECT TO US RELATIONS WITH ETHIOPIA, SEELYE REFERRED TO HIS MOST RECENT VISITS TO ADDIS, NOTING THAT HE HAD FOUND ETHIOPIA SOMEWHAT OF A PARADOX. ON THE ONE HAND, MENGISTU AND HIS COLLEAGUES IN THE DIRG ADHERE TO POLICIES HOSTILE TO THE US; ON THE OTHER HAND, TOP OFFICIALS IN THE MINISTRIES OF DEFENSE AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS HAD RECEIVED HIM WARMLY AND QUITE OBVIOUSLY THERE IS STILL A SUBSTANTIAL SEGMENT OF THE POPULATION WHICH HAS POSITIVE FEELINGS TOWARD THE US. SEELYE SAID THAT USG HAS FELT THAT BY CONTINUING, AT LEAST TO A DEGREE, OUR MILITARY ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS IN ETHIOPIA WE ARE SERVING OUR LONG-RUN INTERESTS. HOWEVER, THIS POLICY IS UNDER REVIEW AND ANY DECISIONS WHICH RESULT FROM THIS REVIEW WILL OBVIOUSLY TAKE INTO ACCOUNT THE INTERESTS AND VIEWS OF OUR FRIENDS IN THE AREA. IN THIS CONNECTION, HE OBSERVED THAT DURING HIS VISIT TO NAIROBI KENYAN OFFICIALS HAD ADVOCATED OUR CONTINUING OUR MILITARY RELATIONSHIP WITH ETHIOPIA, EVEN THOUGH KENYA'S POLICIES ARE DIAMETRICALLY OPPOSED TO THOSE OF MENGISTU. THE KENYAN AUTHORITIES SAY THEY

WOULD BE CONCERNED THAT ANY USG "DISENGAGEMENT" FROM ETHIOPIA MIGHT FURTHER STRENGTHEN THE SOVIET POSITION IN THE AREA.

6. PRESIDENT NIMEIRI THANKED SEELYE FOR HIS EXPOSITION, WELCOMED HIS VISIT TO KHARTOUM AND EMPHASIZED THE IMPORTANCE WHICH SUDAN ATTACHES TO ITS RELATIONS WITH THE US. HE SAID THAT SUDAN IS PLEASED THAT THE US HAS RESUMED ITS BILATERAL PROGRAMS AND HE HOPED THAT ACTION ON THESE PROGRAMS WOULD BE ACCELERATED. HE SAID THAT THE SUDAN STANDS FIRMLY WITH THE US AND THE WEST IN OPPOSITION TO THE SOVIET EFFORTS TO PENETRATE THE AREA. HE WAS CONCERNED WITH SOVIET SUCCESSES ACHIEVED THUS FAR AND FELT THAT IT IS IMPORTANT THAT THE US ACT AS A COUNTERWEIGHT.

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ACTION SS-25

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R 281121Z FEB 77
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EXDIS

7. NIMEIRI STATED THAT THE SUDAN IS CONCERNED WITH RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN ADDIS LEADING TO THE CLEAR ASSUMPTION OF POWER THERE BY MENGISTU. HE SAID THAT WHEN HE HAD VISITED THE US LAST JUNE HE HAD TOLD PRESIDENT FORD THAT THE SUDAN ENDORSED US MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO ETHIOPIA AS A MEANS OF CURBING SOVIET EXPANSION. HOWEVER, SINCE MENGISTU TOOK OVER THE REINS OF POWER A FEW WEEKS AGO IT HAS BECOME QUITE CLEAR THAT ETHIOPIA IS MOVING IRREVOCABLY INTO THE SOVIET CAMP. HE ALLUDED TO THE SOVIET UNDERTAKING TO PROVIDE ARMS TO ETHIOPIA AND THE RECENT APPEARANCE IN ADDIS OF HIGH-LEVEL DELEGATIONS FROM COMMUNIST COUNTRIES. HE INDICATED THAT THE SUDAN NO LONGER CONSIDERS IT DESIRABLE FOR THE US TO CONTINUE TO ASSIST ETHIOPIA MILITARILY. THIS ONLY STRENGTHENS

WHAT HAS CLEARLY BECOME A PRO-SOVIET REGIME. NIMEIRI CLAIMED IN PASSING THAT CUBAN MILITARY WERE ALREADY TRAINING ETHIOPIANS IN HARRAR.

8. IN CONNECTION WITH AN EXCHANGE ON ERITREA, PRESIDENT NIMEIRI RECALLED HIS EFFORTS TO MEDIATE THE ETHIOPIAN/ERITREAN CRISIS. HE SAID THAT HE HAD PROPOSED THAT THE TWO PARTIES MEET TOGETHER
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AND DECIDE ON ONE OF THREE ALTERNATIVES: A FEDERATED ERITREA, AUTONOMY FOR ERITREA OR INDEPENDENCE. HE REGRETTED THAT THE NEGATIVE POSITION OF THE ETHIOPIAN GOVT HAD VITIATED HIS EFFORTS. IN ANSWER TO SEELYE'S QUESTION AS TO WHETHER HE FELT AN INDEPENDENT ERITREA WOULD HAVE A STABILIZING OR DESTABILIZING EFFECT IN THE AREA, HE EXPRESSED THE VIEW THAT INDEPENDENCE FOR ERITREA WOULD BE STABILIZING SINCE IT WOULD END THE ERITREAN INSURRECTION BY MEETING LEGITIMATE INTERESTS OF THE ERITREANS. SEELYE WONDERED WHETHER SUCH A DEVELOPMENT WOULD NOT CREATE PERMANENT TENSIONS BETWEEN ADDIS AND ASMARA. NIMEIRI COUNTERED THAT ERITREANS WERE ENTIRELY DIFFERENT FROM ETHIOPIANS. RECOGNIZING THIS, ESTABLISHMENT INDEPENDENT ERITREA WOULD NOT PERPETUATE TROUBLE BUT RATHER RESOLVE IT AS HAD HAPPENED IN CASE SUDAN AND EGYPT. ADDITIONALLY, MARXIST IDEOLOGY WAS NOW STRONG IN ADDIS AND SHOULD NOT BE EXTENDED TO ERITREA. ERITREA, ON OTHER HAND, WAS NOT IDEOLOGICALLY ORIENTED AND WOULD GRANT ERITREANS SELF-DETERMINATION.

9. SEELYE ASKED FOR PRESIDENT'S VIEWS REGARDING SOMALIA, INCLUDING SOMALIA/SOVIET RELATIONS AND SOMALIA'S IRREDENTIST AMBITIONS REGARDING TERRITORIES IN ETHIOPIA AND KENYA. NIMEIRI STATED THAT THERE IS A CONSIDERABLE AMOUNT OF DISAFFECTION IN SOMALIA WITH REGARD TO THE OVERWHELMING SOVIET PRESENCE THERE. WHILE THE SOVIETS ARE FOR THE MOMENT WELL ENTRENCHED IN SOMALIA, HE BELIEVED THAT THE DEVELOPING SOVIET RELATIONSHIP WITH ETHIOPIA WOULD EVENTUALLY SOFTEN SOMALIA UP TO ARAB OVERTURES. MOSCOW, HOWEVER, PROBABLY DOES NOT THINK THAT ITS MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO ETHIOPIA WILL PREJUDICE ITS POSITION IN SOMALIA BECAUSE AT THE MOMENT SOMALIA HAS NO ALTERNATIVE SOURCE FINANCIAL AND OTHER SUPPORT. NIMEIRI SAID HE WAS NOW RPT NOW WORKING CLOSELY WITH EGYPT AND SYRIA, AS WELL AS SAG, KUWAIT AND UAE, IN AN EFFORT TO WEAN SOMALIA AWAY FROM THE SOVIETS. HE SEEMED TO BELIEVE THAT THESE EFFORTS HAVE SOME PROSPECT OF SUCCESS AND REFERRED IN THIS CONNECTION TO WHAT SADAT HAD DONE IN EGYPT IN EJECTING RUSSIANS. SOMALIS DID NOT WANT SOVIETS AND WERE, AFTER ALL, A MOSLEM PEOPLE. NIMEIRI SAID THAT THIS WOULD BE ONE OF THE TOPICS TO BE DISCUSSED
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HERE BETWEEN HIM, SADAT AND ASSAD.

10. COMMENT. NIMEIRI WAS CLEARLY PLEASED BY SEELYE'S CALL AS ANOTHER INDICATION OF CORDIALITY IN USG/GOS TIES. HIS REMARKS ON HORN UNDERSCORE IMPRESSION WE HAVE BEEN RECEIVING HERE THAT GOS REGARDS TIME AS RIPE FOR GREATER EFFORTS BY ARAB MODERATES TO SUPPORT OPPONENTS OF EPMG IN INTEREST OF WHAT SUDANESE CALL "RED-SEA SECURITY". NIMEIRI WILL NO DOUBT BE SEEKING SELL THIS VIEW TO SADAT AND ASSAD DURING THEIR CURRENT TALKS.
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